

TOWN GREEN June 2024

After the recent Annual Town Meetings, there is some good and some troubling environmental news. On the positive side, Truro voters emphatically rejected relocating the DPW to the proposed Route 6 site, preserving an important open space where a busy road, the Public Safety facility and a residential neighborhood meet. In this case, budgetary restraint and environmental protection converged, and voters' approval for moving ahead with the DPW Campus Plan on Town Hall Hill means both lower taxpayer cost and a DPW site with no negative environmental impact. Voters also approved the Climate Resiliency and Infrastructure Stabilization Fund "to support planning to identify key climate-related hazards, vulnerability and strengths, and to develop adaptation actions."

More disturbing for Truro's environmental future was the vote to approve the recommendations of the Walsh Property Community Planning Committee (WPCPC) for developing the 69-acre Walsh Property. Although the WPCPC recommended limiting the number of housing units to 160, and many voters expressed support for a gradual development of 60-80 units, the Committee's recommendations evolved without fully taking into account the environmental impact on one of Truro's most precious resources, the pristine water from the two wells in the North Union Field (NUF) located in the northeast corner of the Walsh Property. Currently, these wells supply parts of North Truro, Beach Point, the Truro Public Safety facility, Truro Central School, and Provincetown.

Before proceeding with the WPCPC recommendations for building on the Walsh Property, the newly approved Ad Hoc Walsh Property Advisory Committee and the Town of Truro administration need to factor in some crucial information about future water demand and the results of an up-to-date hydrogeological analysis of the property. In 2023, Environmental Partners delivered a Water System Demand Assessment for Provincetown and Truro, which concluded not only that the NUF wells are already a primary source for Provincetown, but that additional wells will be needed. Earlier, at a [Provincetown and Truro Select Board joint meeting](#), Provincetown Water Superintendent, Cody Salisbury, acknowledged that the "Walsh Property is 'the' site for both watershed protection *and* future water supply" and that it would be possible "to site at least two more wells and easily achieve Zone 1 wellhead protection." He provided a drawing of the possible site for new wells, to the southwest of NUF.

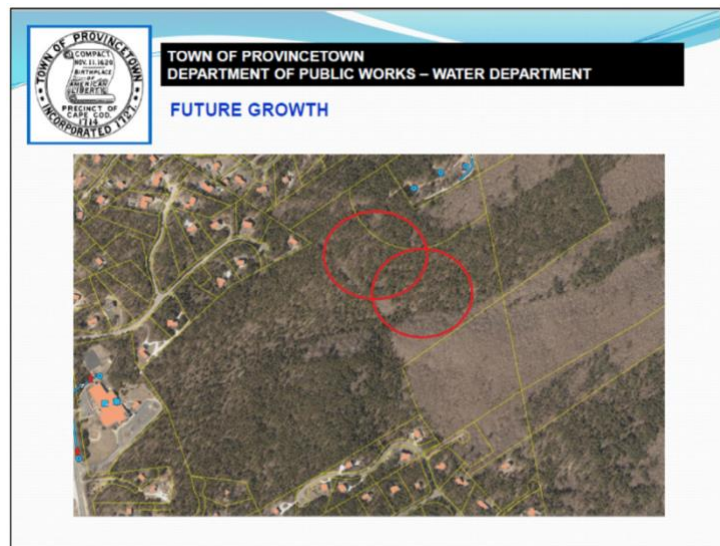


Figure 2 Provincetown Water Department Concept to Accommodate Water Supply Sites for Future.

Such plans require a hydrogeological analysis to determine the effects on the water table of pumping from four wells and to model any danger of groundwater contamination from wastewater flowing into the protected area around the wells. This analysis already exists in a [two-part report](#), “Groundwater Protection Priorities for the Walsh Property Master Plan to Sustain Long Term Drinking Water Availability and Quality,” from expert hydrogeologist and former Director of Water Resources at the Cape Cod Commission, Tom Cambareri.¹ In Part 1 of the report, his analysis demonstrates that daily pumping from the existing NUF wells creates “drawdowns of the water table of greater than 13 ft,” and “if contaminants from wastewater, stormwater, and other sources are released to the ground in and near the Walsh property, they will migrate directly towards the NUF wells” (p. 12). In Part 2 of his report, Mr. Cambareri provides contour maps showing the “deep depressions in the water table” caused by continued pumping from NUF wells and possible future wells. Again, the maps show how “Up to 100% of the wastewater discharged on the Walsh property will be drawn directly into the water supply wells under varying conditions” (p. 14).



The inescapable conclusion is that the Ad Hoc Walsh Property Advisory Committee should advise the Town administration to conduct public discussions of the Water System Demand Assessment and to consult Mr. Cambareri—or commission another independent hydrogeological study—before pursuing any development on the Walsh Property.

-Elaine Beilin

¹ See information about Mr. Cambareri’s [impeccable credentials](#).